

MINOAN WANNABEES: THE RESURRECTION OF MINOANINFLUENCES IN SCANDINAVIAN ARCHAEOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter I discuss recent attempts to link the Scandinavian Bronze Age with Minoan Crete. The current political agenda of Europeanism is one important incentive behind these efforts to search for a pan-European identity in the past. Evidence of contacts between northern and southern Europe is suggested mainly through the identification of similarities between Scandinavian images and motifs from the Mycenaean and Minoan world. This approach is not entirely new. In the late 19th century Oscar Montelius had already presented similar ideas on Bronze Age cultural contacts between the two regions. In fact, beside the pan-European discourse, the current neo-diffusionist trend could also be seen in the context of a reaction against a prevailing neo-evolutionary and processualist explanatory framework (which, in turn, could be seen as a reaction against a culture-historical diffusionist framework). The alleged contacts, however, are based on tenuous archaeological evidence: not only are the iconographic similarities often the result of arbitrary interpretations of the images in question, but there are also great chronological discrepancies. Moreover, Scandinavian archaeologists tend to accept obsolete ideas about Minoan culture and transfer these to a Scandinavian Bronze Age context in an uncritical manner.